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ABSTRACT

The effect and efficiency with which an administrator manages crises may well determine his or her degree of success in resolving the situation. This book serves as a guideline to help administrators prepare for and respond to a wide variety of crisis situations. Following the introduction titled "Advance Preparation for Crises," five chapters provide information, drawn from actual personal experiences, on the following categories of crises--individual-related, group-related, communication-related, finance-related, administrator's personal crises, and major disasters. The first section of each chapter presents basic information about the topic. The second section asks readers to consider alternative approaches to resolving the crisis and to reflect on the effects of each. The third section describes the actions taken and offers an indepth discussion of the situation. (LMI)

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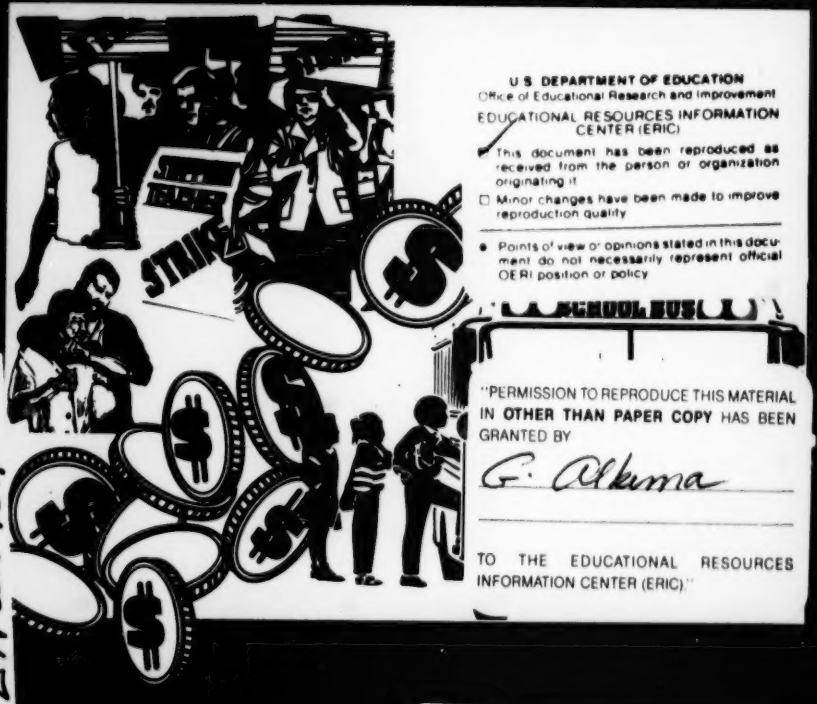
Crisis Management

A Guide to School Crises and Action Taken



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Crisis Management

A Guide to School Crises and Actions Taken

Jerry J. Herman

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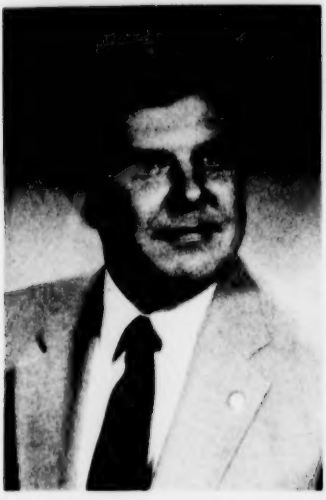
Dedication



In memory of Joseph Piasecki, superintendent of schools;
husband and father; colleague and friend.

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Preface

I decided to add this amendment to my original preface statement on Thursday, December 16, 1993. As I worked toward completion of this book, my friend whom I mentored and respected, Joseph Piasecki, the Superintendent of Schools in Chelsea, Michigan, was shot to death in a school by a teacher with a 9-mm handgun. With the permission of his wife and the cooperation of the president of the school board, in the last actual case in this book I have related the actions taken by school authorities to deal with this serious crisis. I completed this writing on December 23, 1993, because of my driving personal need to complete it in honor of Joe.

I thought back to the time my life was threatened when I was serving as a superintendent of schools in New York State and of the time one of my doctoral students phoned me in tears at 3:00 a.m. to tell me, in a breaking voice, that a student had been shot to death in the hall outside of his office in the high school where he served as principal. These types of crises are all too common in the schools of this country and, although these are dramatic examples, all administrators and aspiring administrators must be prepared to deal with a wide range of crisis situations.

Anyone who has served one or more districts in an administrative position has experienced at least one crisis; those who have

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served as administrators for a long time period will have experienced numerous crises varying in type and complexity. New administrators should be keenly aware that they will be expected to handle a wide variety of crises during their careers and that these may include one or more major disasters.

The effectiveness and efficiency with which an administrator manages crises may well determine his or her degree of success in resolving the situation. A high level of success will result in (a) students' respect, (b) teachers' and classified employees' support, (c) supervisors' and board of education members' confidence, (d) community confidence and support, and (e) an increase in the administrator's self-assurance and satisfaction with his or her service. On the other hand, a very low level of success in handling crises will result in (a) loss of support from students, employees, supervisors, board of education members, and the community at large; and (b) loss of the administrator's self-confidence in his or her ability to handle major problems. The ultimate penalty for poor performance related to crises resolutions can be the loss of employment.

Crisis Management: A Guide to School Crises and Actions Taken provides insights into a wide variety of crisis situations. The crises discussed are drawn from the actual personal experiences of the author or from those told to the author by other administrators. However, the names of individuals, schools, or school districts are protected by the use of fictitious names in my description of the crises used in this text. The one exception to this confidentiality is that of the shooting death of my friend, Joseph Piasecki.

The categories of crises addressed in this volume include those that focus on (a) individual-related crises, (b) group-related crises, (c) communication-related crises, (d) finance-related crises, (e) administrator's personal crises, and (f) major disasters. Several examples are provided under each of these headings.

The book is organized so that readers will be encouraged to think about potential solutions to related crises. For each crisis covered, the initial section states essential basic information. The second section asks readers to consider alternative approaches to resolving the crisis and to reflect on the effects of each of the alternatives. The third section reveals the actual solutions that were employed, along with an in-depth discussion of the crisis.

All administrators face the likelihood that they will be responsible for handling many unexpected crisis situations, ranging from routine daily problems to major disasters. This book will provide the administrator with experiences in simulating—by nonrisk reflective thinking—potential solutions to those potential crises.

JERRY J. HERMAN

About the Author

Jerry J. Herman is currently a Professor of Administration and Planning in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. During his career, he has distinguished himself in numerous public school administrative posts: as a university administrator; as a prolific author on administrative matters; and as a consultant to public school districts, educational associations, educational foundations, universities, and businesses.

His public school experiences include teaching at the elementary, junior high, senior high, junior college, and university graduate levels. He also has served as a principal, an elementary curriculum director, a secondary curriculum director, a director of district-level research, an assistant superintendent of instruction, and a superintendent of schools for approximately a 20-year period.

He has written widely on management and education, having authored over 150 articles and 18 books on administrative and management matters. Among the numerous honors he has received are employer of the year, one of the 100 best administrators in North America, *Who's Who in Education*, *Who's Who in Educational Administration*, and Honored Alumnus from his undergraduate university.

He is a serious student and researcher in the field of educational administration. Most important, he writes about matters that he has put into practice during his various personal administrative and consulting experiences.

Advance Preparation for Crises

Inevitably, an administrator who remains in the business for any length of time will experience multiple crises. It is thus important that he or she does not respond to such crises with trial and error actions. What really counts is that the administrator (a) anticipates, whenever possible, potential crises; (b) understands the specific crisis; (c) develops policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to deal with crises as they arise; (d) has a well-developed set of procedures for dealing with the media during crises; and (e) involves him- or herself and important others in damage control.

Anticipating Potential Crises

If an administrator keeps his or her eyes wide open and ears tuned to the ground, it is possible to anticipate certain types of crises. For example, it is common for many signs to be evident during labor/management contract negotiations that a teachers' or classified employees' strike may result. If a strike is anticipated, a thorough strike plan should be developed in advance of this potential crisis.

When a state has a shortfall in the amount of income it has anticipated, it becomes likely that the payment of state aid to the school districts will be delayed past the expected due date. Likewise, it becomes more probable that the amount of state aid allocated to the school districts may be severely reduced. If the state appears to be diminishing its support for the local school districts, a close watch of this trend during the school year will allow effective contingency plans to be developed.

Sometimes an administrator discovers, in advance, that a group of parents is vigorously opposed to the closing of their very old and outdated local elementary school building. In such a case, a continuous and complete dialogue with all parties involved may prevent the disagreement from developing into a harmful, full-blown crisis situation. When an administrator involves all of the parties to a potential crisis in ongoing dialogue, it may be possible to completely avert the crisis or, at the very least, to conduct intelligent damage control.

Understanding the Parameters of the Specific Crisis

Besides anticipating and, when possible, intervening to head off a potential crisis, it is important that, when a crisis does occur, the administrator understands the parameters of that specific crisis. Although approaches to intervention and/or crisis management may vary widely, depending on the type of situation, the management sequence is the same for all crises. The following sequential steps will assist the administrator in effectively dealing with crisis situations:

1. Discover that a crisis exists.
2. Determine the cause(s) of the crisis.
3. Ascertain the breadth and depth of the crisis.
4. Determine the length of time needed to deal with and/or resolve the crisis.
5. Decide who should be involved in the crisis management.
6. Refer to and follow applicable crisis policies and SOPs.

7. Negotiate a solution to the crisis, if possible (see, as examples, the closing of school, a potential teacher strike, and the loss of state aid).
8. Prepare a plan to bring the situation back to normal when the crisis is over.

Developing Crisis Policies and Standard Operating Procedures

The intelligent administrator understands that crises are inevitable and that administrative failure to effectively and efficiently manage a crisis is due to his or her negligence, lack of advance planning, or misunderstanding of the parameters of the crisis. Before any crisis has a chance to develop, then, administrators must have crisis policies and SOPs in place. In developing a crisis management notebook and the operational SOPs necessary to the optimum management of crises, it is important to first assemble a group of "key" stakeholders. This stakeholders' crisis planning group should then complete the following steps:

1. Develop a working definition of the term *crisis* by operationally clarifying which situations will be classified as crisis situations and which will be classified as problem or noncrisis conflict situations.
2. Review and anticipate specific crisis situations and develop a crisis matrix that classifies by type all crisis situations that may occur in the school or in the district.
3. Determine who should be involved in the intervention and management team for each type of crisis in the crisis matrix.
4. Based on the crisis scenarios in the matrix, develop specific policies, SOPs, and action plans for each category of crisis that may evolve.
5. Place the written policies, SOPs, and action plans in a spiral-bound notebook that will easily allow for future modifications. Copies of the notebook should be distributed to every administrator in the school district as well as to all other key persons who may be involved in the intervention or management of a crisis.

Although the specific contents of crisis policies will differ for such situations as a suicide; a theft; a financial crisis; a crisis of community support; or a fire, a tornado, or another major catastrophe, all crisis policies should answer the following questions:

- Which individuals will be involved in the intervention and/or management of each crisis situation?
- Who will deal directly with the media during and after the crisis?
- What specific procedures will be followed? Also, what specific activities will be assigned to the building principal, the superintendent of schools, the information coordinator, the members of the crisis intervention and management team, the members of the board of education, and the president of the board of education?
- In case of a suicide, murder, or accidental death of a student or employee, who will be assigned to assist the students and/or the employees in dealing with the emotional fallout?
- In the event of a criminal situation, who will act as official liaison with the police or other authorities?
- Who will be responsible for establishing a telephone hot line to the community at large if the situation calls for rumor control?
- Who will be assigned to coordinate and maintain a written paper trail detailing the crisis?

Dealing With the Media During Crisis Situations

Because crisis situations are often sensationalized by the media, it is important that the school or district presents a thorough and factual representation of the crisis situation to the print and nonprint media. It is essential that schools and districts establish good relations with all media representatives *before* a crisis occurs. If members of the media have to individually dig out pertinent information and talk to uninformed and partially informed individuals on a trial and error basis, the result will likely be an inaccurate and sensationalized report on the situation.

The best ways to ensure accurate and nonbiased reporting by the media include the following:

1. Whenever possible, provide media representatives with advance information about potential crises; alert them, for example, when a potential employees' strike or financial problems are anticipated.
2. Always give complete and accurate information about the crisis to the media.
3. Do not withhold information that may put the school or the district in an unfavorable light if that information is crucial to accurately reporting the situation.
4. Designate a single school representative to coordinate all information related to the crisis and have that individual serve as the liaison with all media representatives.
5. If a media source reports inaccurate or damaging information about the school or the district, ask a friend of the school district to write a letter to the editor that corrects the facts or have the school district issue an official statement—even if it has to be a paid school district release.
6. When the crisis has passed, if needed, issue a press release or a TV and radio spot clarifying and detailing both the crisis situation and the management procedures used to resolve it.

Involving Key Persons in Damage Control

In general, the key persons who may have to be involved in damage control, depending on the specific crisis, will include (a) any employee involved in the crisis, (b) the principal at the site of the crisis, (c) the superintendent of schools, (d) the members of the school board, (e) the school district's key communicators, (f) the school district's information coordinator and communication specialist, (g) the school district's attorney, and (h) the members of the crisis intervention and management team.

The following activities should be included in a damage control plan:

- Establish priorities for the actions and activities that are to take place. For example, when should the media be contacted, and when should police become involved?
- Make certain that all communications are centralized and that a specific person is designated to carry out the responsibility.
- Immediately clarify the duties, the responsibilities, the authority, and the liability of all parties involved in the crisis.
- Remember that a crisis does not occur in a vacuum. Planning should include arrangements for uninterrupted continuation of all other normal activities of the school and the district.
- Take steps to deal with issues of trust and security, as well as the emotional impact of the crisis on students, employees, and community members.
- Maintain a comprehensive, open, and thorough network of education members, other governmental units, and print and nonprint media representatives. The communication contacts will vary, depending on the specific crisis, but it is preferable to be overly inclusive than to chance missing an important communication link.

Author's Comments

In the school setting, dealing with crises is an everyday fact of life for administrators. Although the frequency, the type, and the magnitude of individual crises may vary from school to school and from district to district, it is crucial that administrators (a) anticipate potential crises, (b) develop policies and SOPs for the various potential crisis situations, (c) involve a group of key stakeholders to develop and distribute a crisis management notebook to significant crisis management players, (d) create a crisis intervention and management group that can be immediately mobilized for any crisis situation that arises, (e) pay particular attention to the coordination of information, and (f) learn to communicate effectively with students, employees, members of the community's board of education, and the media.

People-Related Crises

This chapter presents four people-related crisis case studies. The first involves a student; the second, a school transportation director; the third, a middle school instrumental music teacher; and the fourth, a high school principal. Background information for each case is provided, after which the reader is asked to complete a reflective decision-making exercise. At the end of the chapter, the actual steps taken by the school district's personnel to resolve these crises are described.

Case 1: A Student in Trouble

This case involved an attractive and popular female senior student in a high school of 2,000+ students. She had been in the same school district in an affluent area of Chicago from the time she was an elementary student.

Prior to the 11th grade, she was a straight-A student, a member of the student council, and an excellent athlete. In her junior year, her grades deteriorated rapidly, and she gave up athletics and her role in the student council.

Although she had planned to go on to the university after graduating from high school, during the last 2 years she had developed a dismal academic record and was often truant. Eventually, she was caught smoking pot on the school grounds, and the board of education called a meeting to determine whether or not she should be expelled from school.

An investigation by school authorities revealed that during the summer between her sophomore and junior years, two tragic events had occurred: (a) Her father, who was only 40 years old, died unexpectedly of a heart attack; and (b) her mother was in a serious accident in which the car caught fire, leaving her mother's face terribly disfigured. The results of these two events were that her emotional and financial security, as well as her college future, became severely jeopardized.

Case 2: A Transportation Director's Transgression

Two divorced, single-parent, female bus drivers asked for a meeting with the assistant superintendent of business. They complained that the male director of transportation, who was married and had children, had continually harassed them by threatening them with the loss of their jobs if they did not accompany him to a local motel for sexual purposes. The women, who were 24 and 29 years old, acknowledged that on several occasions they had gone with him to the motel and consented to having sexual relations because they were the sole financial support for their young children and they feared losing their jobs.

Case 3: A Middle School Teacher's Music Sours

An instrumental music teacher at a middle school with 865 students in a small suburban town had been employed for the past 3 years by a school district in Michigan. She succeeded a highly regarded instrumental music teacher who had taken a position at the high school.

During the first teacher's service, the school band had grown to over 400 student members, had developed a large support group of parents and community residents, had received the highest possible ratings in the state's annual adjudication competitions, and had been invited to perform at various state and national functions.

During the first 2 years of her employment, the principal, who had a reputation for being a fair and helpful teachers' supervisor, had evaluated the current music teacher's work as inadequate. After discussing the matter, both the superintendent and the principal agreed that a specific action program was to be instituted for the teacher's 3rd year of employment and that the outcome of this program during the year would determine whether she had satisfactorily improved her performance or whether she should then be fired for incompetence.

Case 4: The High School Principal and the Disappearing Cheese Rounds

The high school principal was observed taking federally subsidized food (cheese rounds) out of the school cafeteria's storage area and then taking the cheese to a students' summer camp that he owned. Two legal issues were involved. Along with the problem of stealing, the situation was complicated by the transferring of federally subsidized foodstuffs designated for the school's subsidized food service program to his private nonschool-related use.

Reader's Reflective Solutions

For each of the preceding cases, take a moment to reflect on the background information. Then list the three best action alternatives you think should be taken (use a separate sheet of paper for each case):

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

For each alternative action, do a force-field analysis in which you list the supporting and constraining factors that will help you determine the probability of the action's success.

Supporting factors

_____

_____

_____

Constraining factors

_____

_____

_____

Now that you have reflected on the supporting and constraining factors for each case, select the *one* action that you feel has the greatest probability of success and explain why you have selected this action over the others.

_____

_____

_____

Actual Steps Taken in Each Case

Case 1

At the board of education hearing, all of the information was reviewed. A high school counselor, the student's mother, the high school principal, and the superintendent were then each asked to recommend what action should be taken.

After reviewing the recommendations and with the agreement of all parties, the decision was made to allow the student to remain in school under the following conditions: (a) She was to attend school every day; (b) a weekly report on the student's progress would be provided to the high school principal, and the student would attend a weekly review meeting with the principal; (c) there would be no further drug incidents; (d) the mother and daughter were

both to attend counseling sessions; and (e) if any of the above conditions were not met, another expulsion hearing would immediately be scheduled.

This story has a happy ending. The student successfully changed her habits and completed high school with the rest of her class. She went on to college and eventually received a doctoral degree from a prestigious university.

Case 2

There was a thorough hearing of all information provided by the two bus drivers. Also, copies of the hotel registrations were obtained, showing that the incidents had taken place during the transportation director's work hours and providing evidence that he had registered under his real name on the dates specified by the bus drivers. Consequently, the assistant superintendent of business, the superintendent, and the school attorney met with the director of transportation and confronted him with the evidence. They also presented a written charge of sexual harassment that was signed and dated by the two bus drivers.

The transportation director was given an opportunity to respond to the alleged sexual harassment charges and was told that he could have access to legal counsel, prior to responding, if he so desired.

During the conference with the director of transportation, it was decided that his wages would be deducted for the days during which he was at the motel during working hours, and a written reprimand on this matter was to be placed in his permanent personnel file.

On the matter of the alleged sexual harassment, the following potential actions were recommended:

1. Criminal actions could be brought by the bus drivers against the transportation director, in which case the district superintendent and the assistant superintendent for business would agree to appear as witnesses for the prosecution.
2. Charges could be filed with the appropriate authorities under Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972.

3. If there was a criminial conviction, or if the charges were determined to be true after a Title IX investigation, the director of transportation would be dismissed from his position in the school district.

After reviewing all of the potential remedies, the director of transportation admitted that the allegations were true and resigned his position. As a condition for allowing him to resign without further action by the school district, he was required to sign and date a document in which he agreed not to apply for another job in any school district.

Case 3

The action program included the following elements: (a) The district director of music and the assistant superintendent for personnel, who at one time was a band director, were assigned to meet weekly to observe the music teacher and to identify specific areas that required improvement; (b) these observations were to be put in writing, specific technical suggestions were provided, and demonstrations were also given to assist the teacher in improving her performance; (c) tape recordings were to be made of practice lessons and of public performances; (d) all complaints and compliments (there were none) by parents and students were to be put in writing and given to the teacher; (e) the increase or decrease in the number of students who joined the band was to be considered objective evidence; and (f) results of state-level and other adjudication ratings were to be used as another means of measuring improvement or lack of improvement.

The weight of evidence at the end of the year indicated that no improvement had been made, and the music teacher was deemed incompetent. The music teacher was provided a hearing with the state's tenure commission, and the tenure commission, on review of the evidence that had been compiled, agreed with the school district's dismissal action. The tenure commission agreed that there was just cause for dismissal and that due process had been followed. It was noted that the district's administrators had provided technical assistance in evaluating the teacher, had given her ade-

quate time to show improvement, and had provided written copies of all relevant material to the music teacher.

Case 4

The evidence was presented to the principal, and the superintendent and the school district's attorney met with the principal for review. The principal and the superintendent summarized the possible actions that could be taken to resolve this issue. Eventually, the following actions were agreed on:

1. The principal was to purchase 20 identical cheese rounds at a price of hundreds of dollars as restitution for the five cheese rounds he took for his personal use.
2. A written reprimand and a detailed account of the incident were to be placed in the principal's permanent personnel file.
3. A letter would be drafted by the school district's attorney, signed by every member of the school board and the superintendent, and sent to the principal, indicating that any further incidence of stealing would result both in his termination and in criminal action being taken against him.

Group-Related Crises

In this chapter, four group-related case studies are presented. The first involves the changing of school attendance boundaries; the second, the buying or condemning of patrons' existing housing; the third, a potential teacher union strike; and the fourth, an ongoing communication problem within the school community. Background information is provided, and the reader is then asked to complete a reflective decision-making exercise. The chapter ends with descriptions of the actions taken by each school district's personnel to resolve the crises.

Case 1: Changing Student Attendance Boundaries

This school district had two middle schools: one located in an affluent part of the district and one located in a low socioeconomic section of the district. The school located in the low socioeconomic area had 400 students enrolled in a building with a 900-student capacity. The school in the affluent area, which also had a building capacity of 900 students, had 1,500 students enrolled.

The residents of the affluent area were very concerned about overcrowding in the school their children attended, and they wanted

the board of education to build a large addition to the existing building. An investigation by the administration and the board of education found that, although much more money was being expended per student in the low socioeconomic section of the district, the students did not receive the same quality programs as those that were offered to the students in the affluent section. It was clear to the board of education that the current status was (a) not cost-effective and (b) not equitable in terms of the educational opportunities offered to the students.

Case 2: Buying or Condemning Patrons' Existing Housing

In this case, a school district required that a new high school be built in a school district where all of the land was already in use for existing housing and businesses. The old high school, which housed 1,650 students, was 84 years old, and it had deteriorated to the point that it had to be replaced.

The administration and the board of education were faced with the task of developing an action program to remedy the situation.

Case 3: Dealing With a Potential Teacher Union Strike

This case took place in a state that had a history of teacher union strikes. Just before the beginning of the regular school year, during a period of intensive union/management collective bargaining negotiations, management representatives were informed that the local district's teachers were planning to join with teacher unions from 28 school districts to call for a regional strike.

Because there had been a history of strikes and the information source was known to be reliable, the administration decided to discuss the matter in executive session with the board of education. The "sunshine laws" in the state permitted executive sessions to be held when dealing with strategic and tactical matters related to collective bargaining. Following a lengthy discussion, an action

program was agreed on by the members of the board and the superintendent of schools.

Case 4: Ongoing School District Communications Crisis

The residents of a fast-growing suburban school district were affluent, well-educated, and very mobile. In fact, the district experienced a 32% turnover of students every year. At every meeting of the board of education, a variety of groups would appear to vociferously express their opinions on what the board should be doing to assist their children. In addition, the teachers, principals, central office administrators, and the superintendent of schools all received a constant barrage of parental requests and mandates.

Reader's Reflective Solutions

For each of the preceding cases, take a moment to reflect on the background information. Then list the three best action alternatives you think should be taken (use a separate sheet of paper for each case):

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

For each alternative action, do a force-field analysis in which you list the supporting and constraining factors that will help you determine the probability that your action will be successful.

Supporting factors

_____
_____
_____

Constraining factors

_____

Now that you have reflected on the supporting and constraining factors for each case, select the *one* action that you feel has the greatest probability of success, and explain why you have selected this one action over the others.

Actual Steps Taken in Each Case

Case 1

The board of education and the superintendent of schools decided to initiate an action program to correct the situation. First, they changed the student attendance boundaries to equalize the number of students attending each middle school. The solution was designed to eliminate inefficient expenditures that could be better spent on enriching the students' educational opportunities in the future; it was also designed to provide equal educational opportunities for each group of students.

Next, the board of education held open meetings in which the potential solutions were discussed. The residents of the affluent area were adamantly opposed to moving their children to the middle school in the low socioeconomic area. Rumors of student beating, rapes, drug use, and a wide variety of negative situations spread throughout the affluent section of the school district. A group of residents threatened the replacement of all members of the board of education.

Finally, despite the opposition, the board of education stood firm, creating a planning committee of parents from both schools to assist the board and the administration in planning for the change. The board promised all of the residents that the money saved from the previous inefficient operations would be used for improvement of the educational offerings at both middle schools.

Although the sometimes-heated debate continued for approximately 6 months, the new educational programs were put in place, the parents from the affluent area discovered that the rumors were strictly rumors, the district residents were able to resume concentration on their responsibilities as parents, and the school officials were able to resume their normal responsibilities as educators. The students at both schools were the beneficiaries of this hotly contested—but ultimately successful—solution.

Case 2

The district's officials sent a letter to each resident's home, outlining the facts of the situation and requesting the residents to attend an open hearing in the school district's field house. The field house's seating capacity was 4,800 persons, and it was filled for this meeting.

The president of the board opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He then restated the facts of the situation. The superintendent then took over and explained that the board and administration were in need of ideas from the audience to assist them in making a final decision on the matter.

The superintendent asked the residents to involve themselves in creative thinking by using the rules of brainstorming. The superintendent explained that the rules included the following:

1. All ideas are valued.
2. There should be no negative or positive comments made during the generation of ideas.
3. There should be no discussion or questioning for more information during the initial generation of ideas.

He also explained that the purpose was to generate as many ideas as possible in a short period of time. He began the brainstorming session by stating two of his own ideas: (a) to buy out the airport property or (b) to fill the old high school with cement and build the new one on top of it. Extreme examples were deliberately used to stimulate thought.

The audience was asked to break into groups of eight and discuss their brainstormed ideas, and paper and pencil were distrib-

uted to allow each group to present its best idea. Each of these was then placed on an overhead projector and displayed on a large screen in the field house. After a couple of hours, a rather extensive list was developed.

At this point, the meeting ended. Before adjourning, the board told the audience that its next step would be to study all of the ideas that warranted further consideration. It also announced that future board discussions of the matter would be conducted in public session at meetings of the board of education and that prior notification of each meeting would be placed in the area's newspapers and posted in the office of each school in the district.

During later open discussions, audiences were informed that the board and administration had, after considering all the input, determined that these procedures would be used: (a) The board would negotiate a sale price for each house, and (b) in those cases where the owners would not sell or where the owners wanted a ridiculously high price for their home, the board would institute condemnation proceedings.

After further study, the board made a proposal to each owner or owners of the approximately 140 homes that had to be taken. The board would either (a) have three assessors assess the property and then pay the owner(s) 10% over the average assessed fair market value, (b) purchase a new site and pay to move the house to a school district of equal quality, or (c) reluctantly begin condemnation proceedings to obtain the property. Over a 9-month period, all of the property was acquired without initiating a single condemnation suit. The board also advertised for sale at 10% of the original sale price all of the homes that they purchased but then had to remove, with the conditions that the purchaser would (a) move the home out of the district and (b) pay to have dirt brought in to level the existing foundation. This action allowed the district to recoup the 10% above the fair market value premium they had paid to obtain the houses.

Case 3

Knowing that students, residents, teachers, administrators, and members of the board of education all lose when a strike exists, the

board of education and the superintendent of schools decided to take action. The board members felt that it was important to (a) protect students and their educational environment, (b) prevent residents from taking sides or thinking badly of the teachers, and (c) ensure harmonious and supportive continuing relations among residents and employees of the school district.

First, they notified all residents by letter of the potential for a regional strike. In it, they stated that although there was a rumor that the teacher unions in the region were contemplating a regional strike at the beginning of the school year, they did not believe the district's excellent teachers would participate in such an activity.

Second, they informed the residents that, if a master contractual agreement was not reached and ratified by the union before the scheduled start date of the school year, the first day of school would be delayed by 2 weeks. Thus the school year would begin at the normal time only if a timely contractual agreement was reached. The purpose of this strategy was to prevent—if it did plan to participate—the local teachers' union from joining in a regional strike with the other 27 school districts in the region.

This preemptive tactic was successful. A master contractual agreement was signed in time, the teacher strike was averted, excellent community relations were maintained, and students were not deprived of a positive and timely instructional environment. In addition, positive and cooperative labor-management relations were quickly resumed.

Case 4

A two-fold approach was used to resolve the communication problems in this district.

First, 25 volunteer members of the community were recruited for each school and for each of the district's major functional units (instruction, business, personnel, transportation, food service, buildings and grounds maintenance, and central administration). Two teachers and two classified employees were added to each planning team, and a principal was assigned to act as liaison. A community member was elected to chair each of the teams.

These teams were given the reponsibility at each building level for producing all suggestions for improving the education of the students, as well as the district functions. At this stage, the members were directed *not* to take into consideration the financial resources of the district or to project the cost for implementing the suggestions.

At the end of 1 year, each planning group produced its own extensive list of needs. For their purposes, they defined a *need* as the discrepancy between "what is" and "what should be" or "what could be."

Each planning group was next asked to select two community members to serve on a central planning committee to determine the priority listing of each of the hundreds of items on the groups' lists, and to lay out a 5-year program for meeting the prioritized needs. This phase took another year to complete.

The board then received the central planning committee's final report. After review, the board directed the administration to price out and comment on the committee's top 250 recommendations. After the cost and impact analyses were completed, the board decided that (a) because some requested items were contrary to current policy, they would not be implemented but would be reconsidered if the policy was changed in the future; (b) in order to expedite some of the requested changes, some budget expenditure priorities would be shifted; and (c) because some of the requests were too expensive for the the school district to implement with its available financial resources, an election would be held to allow residents to vote on individual tax increases to fund each of them, and only those that received a majority of "yes" votes would be implemented.

An election was held and the board of education then implemented all of the programs that the voters supported. It should be stressed that detailed communications and progress reports were mailed monthly to each household in the district during the entire 3-year period.

Second, permanent communications/governance committees were organized at each school building, identical in makeup to the planning committees. Each governance committee had its own set

of bylaws, a schedule of elective and rotating memberships, and a list of duties and responsibilities. They were authorized to provide input into the budget process and to have a spokesperson attend the official board of education meetings to represent the committees' concerns. Although the representatives were required to go through normal channels to be placed on the agenda, no attempts were made to screen or eliminate topics for discussion, other than personnel matters.

Finance-Related Crises

This chapter discusses three financial crisis case studies. The first deals with the loss of an important millage (tax) election that resulted in split sessions and school closures, the second with the loss of anticipated state aid during the school year, and the third with the illicit use of school funds. Background information for each case is provided, and the reader is then asked to complete a reflective decision-making exercise. The chapter ends with the description of the actual steps taken by the school district's personnel to resolve the crisis situation.

Case 1: Results of the Loss of an Important School Millage Election

This case took place in a school district of about 15,000 students located in a small city. The school district had two high schools, with approximately 1,200 students each, and numerous feeder junior high schools and elementary schools.

The previously adopted school millage derived from property taxes had expired, and the district's board of education had, on three occasions and without success, attempted to obtain enough

votes from the local citizens to renew the expiring millage. In addition, the state required each district to levy a minimum number of mills locally before it could qualify for full state aid funding in accordance with the foundation finance program of the state. As a result of both the voters' failure to renew the millage and the further loss of state aid, the administration was directed to present contingency plans to be reviewed and officially voted on at a regularly scheduled public meeting of the school board.

Case 2: Loss of Anticipated State Aid During the School Year

A district with 5,000+ students and with a yearly budget of approximately $30 million was notified during the middle of the school year that its anticipated state aid would be cut by 10%, or $3 million. The timing was particularly unfortunate because school districts have "front-loaded" expenditures for employee contracts and for purchases of supplies and equipment that are required to effectively begin the school year. The late notification of the state aid reduction due to a shortfall in the state's anticipated income collections made the financial situation considerably worse than it would have been had the cut been announced at the beginning of the school district's fiscal year.

Case 3: Illicit Use of School Funds

This case involved the use of school district funds by a member of the administrative staff for the purpose of buying furniture for his private home and having substantial repairs done to it.

Reader's Reflective Solutions

For each of the preceding cases, take a moment to reflect on the background information. Then list the three best action alternatives

you recommend be taken (use a separate sheet of paper for each case):

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

For each alternative action, do a force-field analysis in which you list the supporting and constraining factors that will help you determine the probability of your action being successful.

Supporting factors

_____
_____
_____

Constraining factors

_____
_____
_____

Now that you have reflected on the supporting and constraining factors for each case, select the *one* action that you feel has the greatest probability of success, and explain why you have selected this one over the other actions.

_____
_____
_____

Actual Steps Taken in Each Case

Case 1

The contingency action program formally adopted by the board of education and implemented by the school district's administration consisted of the measures described below.

All nontenured teachers were laid off. One-half of the custodial, clerical, and food service employees were terminated, along with all teacher and clerical aides. The custodial schedule was reduced to 1 day per week for each building, and custodial personnel were rescheduled to report to a different school building each day.

Where possible, 8-hour days were cut to a 6-hour workday, and the school day was cut to 4 hours for elementary students and 3 hours for junior high and senior high students.

One half of the junior high buildings and one half of the senior high buildings were closed down, and double student shifts were instituted in the buildings that remained open. Teachers were then required to teach six classes to the two different groups of students.

Case 2

The district's decision makers first needed to communicate to the local community the drastic financial situation that existed in the district. They then had to arrive at an action program designed to balance the current year's budgetary expenditures with the actual amount of income available.

In this case, the superintendent met with all employees to provide a factual presentation of the situation that existed in the district. All were advised to submit any suggestions to the superintendent of schools.

A series of public hearings were held. The board of education and the school district's administration decided to develop, prior to collecting information on possible reductions and determining the cost savings of each, a set of criteria for allowing the necessary fiscal adjustments to take place. The agreed-on criteria included the following:

1. No reductions would be made unless a full dollar was saved for every dollar in expenditures to be cut. This prevented layoffs of employees, whose unemployment costs would eat up a substantial amount of the anticipated savings.
2. No student programs would be eliminated, but as many as necessary would be cut back to meet the dollar reduction target. The logic was that if a program was totally cut, it would be a very long time before it could be reinstituted.

3. No equipment would be purchased for the remainder of the year, and supplies would be reduced by one-half of the normal amount.
4. Bus transportation, except in dangerous locations, would be eliminated for students living relatively close to their schools and for which no state aid was received. Also, field trips would be eliminated except for those that were deemed absolutely necessary as part of an ongoing curriculum.
5. All athletic and nonathletic interscholastic and cocurricular activities would be eliminated; however, one each of male, female, and coed athletic and nonathletic activities would be offered during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Each activity was to be selected on the dual basis of the greatest amount of student participants and the least amount of expenditure per student participant.
6. All self-supporting activities would be continued.

In addition, it was agreed that no community or individual financial donations for specific programs would be accepted. This decision was made in order to be fair to all student participants, because it was likely that high-entertainment student activities would be supported at the expense of other valuable programs.

After determining the actual cost savings of each proposal, the entire program of reductions was acted on at an open meeting of the school board. The board and the administration reviewed the process that had been used to make the determinations, emphasizing that they were not doing this to threaten the community and that they did not intend to ask an already highly taxed group of residents to increase their local property tax.

In the end, many members of the community asked the board to allow them to vote on a proposal to raise their taxes to make up the shortfall, rather than make the reductions. The board members reiterated their feeling that the taxpaying public was already making an excellent effort to financially support the school district. However, the board finally agreed to place the tax increase on the ballot for a vote if a petition was brought to the board signed by 20% more voters than the total voting in the last board of education election. The petition was delivered, the board scheduled a millage vote, the residents overwhelmingly approved the additional millage levy,

and the community was able to maintain its high level of quality in the educational offerings to the students of the community.

Case 3

When the questionable use of school funds was uncovered by the auditors, the superintendent of schools collected and documented evidence of the alleged misuse of public funds by the assistant superintendent for business. He then met with the school district's attorney to draft a letter to the assistant superintendent of business. The superintendent and the school district's attorney then met with the board of education in executive session. They presented all of the evidence they had gathered along with a copy of the drafted letter, and, with the board's approval, the following course of action was taken:

1. The assistant superintendent of business was given the opportunity to have a lawyer of her choice present at a scheduled meeting with the superintendent and the district attorney. After they presented their evidence, she admitted that she had indeed used the funds in the manner the evidence suggested.
2. She was advised that she was to be immediately suspended without pay from her position and that she would be expected to reimburse the district for the amount of funds that she had improperly used. Also, a letter would be placed in her permanent personnel file.
3. She was informed that legal action would be taken against her and that she was no longer considered an employee of the school district.

Eventually, the judge in the case placed the assistant superintendent of business on probation, with the provision that she make and prove full restitution to the district.

Administrators' Personal Crises

In this chapter, three personal crisis case studies are discussed. The first deals with an administrator's poor personnel evaluation, the second with an administrator's demotion, and the third with an administrator's firing. Background information is provided, and the reader is then asked to complete a reflective decision-making exercise. The chapter ends with the description of the actual steps taken by the school district's personnel and the individual administrator involved in each case.

Case 1: An Administrator's Poor Personnel Evaluation

Jim was serving in his first year as a high school principal. His immediate supervisor and the person responsible for conducting his formative and summative personnel performance evaluations was the director of secondary education.

The director found that Jim was well-liked by the teachers, classified employees, students, and parents. However, some unsatisfactory areas of performance had been noted during the year. At Jim's summative personnel evaluation conference, the following areas were judged to be in need of improvement:

1. Budget control: Jim overran his site-based budget allocation.
2. Teacher supervision and evaluation: Jim visited classes but did not conduct postobservation conferences with the teachers. He also did not provide them with feedback.
3. Student achievement tracking: He did not monitor student achievement data, nor did he work with the teachers to develop better delivery methods in areas where students were achieving below their expected ability levels.

A written assessment of the evaluation was placed in Jim's personnel file following the summative conference.

Case 2: An Administrator's Demotion

The school district in which Karen served as an elementary principal experienced a large decrease in the number of students enrolled. As a result, Karen's elementary school, which was the oldest in the district, was closed, eliminating her job.

Although there was no tenure for administrators in the state, Karen had acquired tenure as a teacher prior to becoming a principal, so she was assigned to an elementary teaching position for the subsequent school year. The board of education and the superintendent wanted to make certain that Karen was treated as fairly as possible under the circumstances.

Case 3: An Administrator's Firing

Although it is traumatic for an administrator at any level to be fired, the firing of a superintendent is perhaps the most complex example. In this specific case, Fred had signed a 3-year contract with the school district's board of education. During the school board election at the end of his first year as superintendent, a majority of new board members were elected who made it clear that they wanted to change matters in the district. One of their intended changes was the hiring of another superintendent because they were at odds with Fred's philosophical beliefs and with his operating procedures for managing the school district.

After serving only 2 months on the board of education, one of the new board members made a motion to fire Fred; the motion was seconded and passed by a board majority over the outraged objections of the experienced board members. Fred was told to clean out his personal belongings by the end of the week.

Reader's Reflective Solutions

For each of the preceding cases, take a moment to reflect on the background information. Next, list the three best action alternatives you recommend be taken (use a separate sheet of paper for each case):

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

For each alternative action, do a force-field analysis in which you list the supporting and constraining factors that will help you determine the probability of the action's success.

Supporting factors

_____
_____
_____

Constraining factors

_____
_____
_____

Now that you have reflected on the supporting and constraining factors, select the *one* action that you feel has the greatest probability of success, and explain why you have selected this action over the others.

_____
_____
_____

Actual Steps Taken in Each Case

Case 1

At the summative conference, Jim and the director of secondary education agreed to take a couple of weeks to think about ways Jim could overcome the weaknesses exhibited in his first year as a high school principal. They would then meet to share their thoughts and to develop a specific personal improvement plan (PIP) for Jim to implement during the next school year.

The following plan was adopted:

1. The school district's business manager met with Jim to develop a budgetary management control system for him and teach him how to use it.
2. Jim enrolled in a supervision course at an area university. In addition, the director of secondary education agreed to make funds available to allow Jim to attend a weeklong concentrated workshop on teacher supervision and evaluation sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
3. The director of testing and the assistant superintendent for instruction established a series of meetings with Jim to train him in the analysis of students' test results. He was taught how to disaggregate and item-analyze the data by looking for positive and negative trends and ways to differentiate individual students and groups of students who were doing very well from those who were performing poorly. Jim was also given training in methods of working with the teachers and the central office's curriculum specialists to take advantage of the high-performance areas as a means of using the methods employed in other areas. In addition, he was trained in the development of improved instructional delivery systems for use with low-achieving individual students and low-achieving student groups.

Case 2

After talking with Karen, the superintendent of schools wrote a letter to her. One copy was placed in her personnel file, and another

copy was delivered to Karen. The major points of the letter were as follows:

1. Karen was assured that her performance as a principal was excellent and that the sole reasons for the elimination of her principalship were the reduction in student enrollments and the fact that her building was the oldest in the school district.
2. She was given assignment as an elementary teacher and returned to the teachers' salary schedule. However, the superintendent offered her the opportunity to become the summer school principal in order to make up the difference between her salary as a teacher and her previous salary as a principal. Although she would receive no future increases for her summer school responsibilities until her salary caught up with her diminished administrative responsibilities, her salary would be grandfathered until that point was reached.
3. Alternatively, the superintendent offered to assist her in obtaining an administrative position in another district and to give her a reference for any other job she might wish to pursue.

Case 3

Fred contacted the state's superintendents' association and requested that a team of representatives from the state's school boards' association and the superintendents' association meet with the parties. This was the standard procedure in this state for requests originating with a school board or a superintendent of schools.

At the meeting with the intervention team, the newly elected members of the board insisted that Fred was to be fired immediately and that he would not receive any further salary or fringe benefits from the school district. In addition, although there was no objective evidence of inferior performance by Fred, they refused Fred's request for their assistance in obtaining another position.

At this point, the executive director of the superintendents' association advised Fred to hire an attorney. The attorney eventually received the following reluctant concessions from the board of education:

1. Fred would be paid the 2-years' salary remaining in the balance of his contract.
2. Until his contractual termination date or until he received an equal or better superintendency in another school district, Fred would receive his health insurance and all other benefits called for in his contract.
3. He would receive a cash settlement equivalent to his computed daily wage for all accumulated personal leave, sick leave, and earned vacation time.
4. The board of education members promised not to interfere with Fred's endeavor to obtain another superintendency position.

On a personal level, Fred underwent the several stages of grief from the unexpected loss of his position: (a) disbelief, (b) anger, (c) emotional uncertainty about the future and about his abilities, (d) acceptance of the situation, (e) pursuit of a new situation, and (f) return to normalcy.

In addition, Fred's spouse and their children had difficulty comprehending and adjusting to the situation. Fred and his wife discussed the matter and adopted the following plan:

1. The children were told the truth about the situation and assured that they would be secure and able to pursue their normal activities until Fred obtained another position. However, they were informed that some of the extras would have to be temporarily eliminated.
2. Fred and his wife computed their minimum household operating expenses, eliminating items such as vacations, meals out, hairstylist appointments, and so on.
3. They both began a vigorous exercise program in order to better control their stress levels.
4. They both took up hobbies that kept their minds active and productive.
5. They began a systematic search of all job possibilities, bought books about job hunting, and began to actively pursue the future they desired.

A breach-of-contract clause in his employment contract, similar to the one below, might have precluded many of the hardships that Jim and his family faced when the new board members unexpectedly fired him.

In the event that superintendent, ————, be dismissed, demoted, reassigned, or otherwise removed from the superintendent's position prior to the expiration of this employment contract, the sum equal to one (or more) year's contractual salary and the equivalent dollar value of all fringe benefits due for that 1-year period, shall become immediately due and payable, without mitigation, to said superintendent, ————, from ———— School District, as liquidated damages for breach of said contract.

Dealing With Major Disasters

Four case studies are presented in this chapter that deal with major disasters. The first case is a kindergarten bus accident; second, a school building destroyed by fire; third, a tornado that hit a school district; and fourth, the shooting death of a superintendent in a school building by a teacher. Background information is provided, and the reader is then asked to complete a reflective decision-making exercise. A description follows of the actual steps taken by each school district's personnel to manage the crisis situation. The chapter concludes with final comments by the author.

Case 1: A Kindergarten Bus Accident

A school bus filled with kindergartners slid off a snow-covered road, overturned, and came to rest on its roof. A passing motorist saw the accident and stopped to offer assistance, and the driver of the bus asked him to telephone the police and the superintendent of schools. Fortunately, the entire administrative group of the school district was at the same time conducting its weekly administrative meeting, so immediate collective action could be taken.

Case 2: A School Building Destroyed by Fire

An elementary school building filled with students caught fire and burned down during the school day. Because the teachers had previously conducted numerous fire drills, they were able to quickly remove all of the students from the burning structure.

Case 3: A Tornado Hits a School District

A severe, destructive tornado struck the school district unexpectedly late one day. Although it was after normal school hours, a caravan of eight buses loaded with about 400 middle school music students was returning from a state-sponsored yearly music adjudication. The buses were due to arrive at the districts' two middle schools at the time the tornado struck.

School officials had had no contact with the buses since they left the state competition. The situation was grim. In the tornado's wake, millions of dollars of homes and businesses lay destroyed. In fact, the entire district looked like a bombed-out war area.

Case 4: A Superintendent Is Shot to Death

This case involved the shooting death of my personal friend, Joseph Piasecki, who was superintendent of schools in the Chelsea, Michigan School District. Joe was fatally shot in a school building during the regular school day by a teacher with a 9-mm handgun. Present and also shot, but surviving, were a teachers' union representative and the high school principal.

Reader's Reflective Solutions

For each of the preceding cases, take a moment to reflect on the background information. Then list the three best action alternatives

you recommend be taken (use a separate sheet of paper for each case):

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

For each alternative action, do a force-field analysis in which you list the supporting and constraining factors that will help you determine the probability of each action's success.

Supporting factors

_____
_____
_____

Constraining factors

_____
_____
_____

Now that you have reflected on the supporting and constraining factors for each case, select the *one* action that you feel has the greatest probability of success, and explain why you have selected this action over the others.

_____
_____
_____

Actual Steps Taken in Each Case

Case 1

The superintendent was notified of the accident and two buses were sent out to the scene of the accident. In addition, all of the administrators drove their cars to the accident site. After determining that all of the children were uninjured, the administrators

boarded the buses with the children, calming and hand-delivering each child home to his or her parents. At each delivery, the parent(s) were told what had happened and that, although the children appeared to have suffered no physical harm, the parent(s) might wish to take their child to a doctor for further review. Also, while the children were in transit to their homes, an attempt was made to contact each child's parent(s) regarding both the accident and the safety of the child.

The police were called to the scene of the accident, and all of the media were contacted. Each member of the board of education was immediately contacted, and they and the superintendent assigned a single administrator to be the official school district's communicator with the media and the community.

In this situation, the author would add three additional items to these procedures: First, the school district should immediately send for doctors to examine each child at the scene of the accident *before* he or she is taken home or to a hospital. Second, specially trained counselors should be made available immediately to the children, the parents, and the employees involved, as strong emotional reactions can occur during the week following the accident. Third, the school attorney should be alerted and provided with a detailed, factual, written account of the accident in case an accident-related lawsuit is filed.

Case 2

The principal (a) immediately notified the superintendent of schools, who immediately notified the members of the board of education; (b) went directly to the scene of the fire; and (c) ordered the transportation director to send sufficient buses to the site to move all the students and the employees to safe locations at other schools. The superintendent and principal then went directly to the school site. Police and fire authorities were called in. They began a thorough investigation to determine the cause of the fire.

All parents and guardians were contacted to let them know that the children were safe, and the media were also contacted. The media calls were handled by a single administrator, and the children's parents or guardians were notified by each child's teacher.

When the immediate situation was thoroughly under control, contingency plans were implemented. These plans included arranging for alternative school sites for the students and teachers. The students were allowed to remain home for the 2 days it took to finalize the plans. The district applied for and received the insurance money and then hired an architect and a construction management firm to assist in the design and construction of the replacement elementary school. The money for the new school came from the insurance funds and from expenditures from the school district's contingency fund balance accounts.

Case 3

Because roadblocks had been set up to prevent injuries from live fallen wires and to protect the area from looters, the superintendent requested that the state police escort the middle school principals, the food service directors, and himself to the site.

When he got to the schools, the superintendent discovered that the eight middle school buses had arrived safely. He then asked the three television stations and all radio stations to announce that the middle school students were fine and that they would remain at their school sites until it was safe for parents to pick them up or for the district's buses to transport them to their homes. In addition, the principals arranged for the children to use one of the building's phones to call their parents or guardians to personally tell them that they were all right.

A state and local police communication and distribution center was established at one of the middle schools, and a communication and distribution center for the 400+ repair persons sent in by the telephone and electrical companies was established in another middle school. The gymnasiums at all the middle schools were set up as sleeping, bathing, and feeding emergency centers for the residents whose homes had been damaged or destroyed.

Food services were provided on a 24-hour basis for the police and repair persons. These provisions continued for more than 2 months.

When the area was declared safe for travel, normal student instruction resumed. The one exception was that physical education

classes met outside during good weather and in the schools' media centers during inclement weather.

Elements that should be included in emergency planning documents are (a) the assignment of specific duties for a variety of school personnel, (b) a comprehensive plan to communicate the facts, and (c) a continuous and updated training regimen for all of the school district's key employees.

Case 4

After assuming the superintendency in Chelsea, Joe heard that there had been two previous student suicides (not in the district's schools) and that another student had been killed in a car accident. As the excellent and caring superintendent he always was, he immediately began to develop a crisis intervention notebook. Many of the steps taken after his death were those that he had outlined himself in this crisis intervention notebook. Following are the main actions taken by the school board, administrators, teachers, and other employees of the school district in response to this sudden and unexpected tragedy:

1. Because the shooting happened the day before the beginning of the winter holiday vacation, the decision was made to discontinue classes, to have all the students and employees stay at school, to hire an entire staff of substitute teachers, and to bring in a crisis team and a large number of counselors. These actions were taken to assist the students and the employees in dealing with the associated emotional trauma of the superintendent's death. The community and area response was outstanding. Counselors from neighboring school districts, from the local hospital, from Washtenaw County, and from the clergy all supplemented the local school district's counseling staff. More than 100 counselors and mental health specialists volunteered, and each high school classroom was assigned a counselor. Counselors were also provided for the students and employees of the middle and elementary schools.

   Adults were stationed in each hallway to provide a sense of security for the students and the employees. These persons

also monitored the condition of the students and teachers, and those who appeared to be having a severe emotional reaction were taken to a specially established counseling referral center.

During the afternoon of this, the last day of school before vacation, students met in groups, sang songs, tied ribbons to the entrance of the building, and did what they felt they had to do to express their emotional feelings. Again, counselors, administrators, and teachers were present to assist them in handling their insecurity and grief.

Some of the elementary children expressed concern for their safety. Teachers and counselors assured them that they were safe and that they need not worry.

2. The following week, special counseling sessions were made available to the teachers and to other school employees. The mental health personnel at the area hospital also made themselves available for an additional week to assist those who required additional counseling.
3. The director of community education was assigned the task of being the sole contact person with the media, and he was also designated the official spokesperson for the school district.
4. On December 23, 1993, the members of the board of education had not yet decided whether to appoint an official acting superintendent or to do a search for a replacement superintendent. The administrators volunteered to collectively cover all of the superintendent's duties, and the assistant superintendent took over the coordinating function.
5. A date was set for the memorial service, and the district's educational foundation, which Joe had established for the benefit of the students, was renamed the Joseph Piasecki Educational Foundation. The board of education's president of the Chelsea School District announced that the district and the community planned to do many things to honor the memory of their superintendent.
6. Finally, a crisis team was put in place and numerous counselors were made available when the students returned from their winter vacation on January 3, 1994.

Joe and I were colleagues and longtime friends, and I always admired his caring attitude and his foresight. Education lost an outstanding leader when he died, and all of us will greatly miss him.

Author's Final Comments

As mentioned at the beginning of this little volume, everyone who currently serves as an administrator or who aspires to be an administrator will experience numerous crisis situations during his or her career. The following suggestions are offered to assist those individuals who have not already prepared themselves as well as my friend Joe did for crisis management.

1. Do not wait for a crisis to happen before making contingency plans for it.
2. Develop and have the board of education adopt policies and actions to take both during and after the crisis.
3. Develop a comprehensive crisis notebook. This notebook should be distributed to every school in the district. It should include—as Joe's notebook did—counseling provisions, including how to create and then disperse a school district's crisis team; how to organize memorial activities and services when someone dies; and how to appoint a single official spokesperson to deal with the media.

To these items I would add the following: (a) Set up a rumor control center and a widely publicized telephone hot line; (b) allow employees and students to attend funerals (in case of the death of a student or an employee) with no deduction from wages and with provisions for makeup work for students who are absent; (c) describe the types of school- or district-sponsored activities that are acceptable as memorials or grieving activities; and (d) emphasize that normal class schedules should be followed, but allow students and school employees the flexibility to provide and to obtain support during and immediately after the crisis.

Remember! Even though the immediate crisis may be ended, there will still be many activities to accomplish before the school district and the community gets back to functioning normally.

In Chelsea, Michigan, the school district's board members and employees are doing everything they can to honor and remember Joseph Piasecki and to bring a normal and positive learning environment back to the children and youth to whom Joe dedicated his life.

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by **Jerry J. Herman,** University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

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